

# Ecological site F043AY538ID

## Ashy Basalt Canyons and Plateaus

### 23-25" PZ Mesic

### Clearwater Canyons

Last updated: 4/11/2025

Accessed: 08/29/2026

#### General information

**Provisional.** A provisional ecological site description has undergone quality control and quality assurance review. It contains a working state and transition model and enough information to identify the ecological site.

#### MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 043A–Northern Rocky Mountains

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 043A–Northern Rocky Mountains Description of MLRAs can be found in: United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2006. Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Basin. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 296. Available electronically at: [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/ref/?cid=nrcs142p2\\_053624#handbook](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/ref/?cid=nrcs142p2_053624#handbook)

#### LRU notes

Most commonly found in LRU 43A08 (Clearwater Canyons). Significant areas also found in 43A07 (Eastern Columbia Plateau Embayments). Climate parameters were obtained from PRISM and other models for the area. Landscape descriptors are derived from USGS DEM products and their derivatives.

#### Classification relationships

Relationship to Other Established Classifications: United States National Vegetation Classification (2008) – A3446 Ponderosa Pine / Shrub Understory Central Rocky Mt. Forest & Woodland Alliance Washington Natural Heritage Program. Ecosystems of Washington State, A Guide to Identification, Rocchio and Crawford, 2015 – Northern Rocky Mountain Ponderosa Pine Woodland and Savanna Description of Ecoregions of the United States, USFS PN # 1391, 1995 - M333 Northern Rocky Mt. Forest-Steppe-Coniferous Forest-Alpine Meadow Province Level III and IV Ecoregions of WA, US EPA, June 2010 - 15r Okanogan – Colville Xeric Valleys & Foothills and 15s Spokane Valley Outwash Plains This ecological site includes the following USDA Forest Service Plant Associations: PIPO/SYAL, PIPO/PHMA, and PIPO/SYOR. (Williams et. al. 1995)

#### Ecological site concept

This ESD is distinguished by an overstory of ponderosa pine understory shrub component of ninebark, oceanspray, and snowberry. It occurs on canyon sides and structural benches. The soils have developed in mixed Mazama tephra deposits over loess and material from basalt. The soils are very deep, and some soils have a perched water table within 30 inches of the surface during the winter and early spring. They do not have a water table present within 30 inches of the surface during the May to Oct period. The soils are moderately well or well drained and have >3 inches of available water capacity in the top 40 inches. This ESD fits into the National Vegetation Standard's Central Rocky Mt. *Pinus ponderosa* / Shrub Understory alliance.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

|       |                                                                     |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tree  | (1) <i>Pinus ponderosa</i>                                          |
| Shrub | (1) <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i><br>(2) <i>Physocarpus malvaceus</i> |

|            |                                                                       |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Herbaceous | (1) <i>Calamagrostis rubescens</i><br>(2) <i>Achillea millefolium</i> |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Physiographic features

Physiographic Features

Landscapes: Canyonlands, Plateaus

Landform: canyon walls, structural benches, escarpments

Elevation (m): Total range = 255 to 1015 m  
(835 to 3,330 feet)

Central tendency = 525 to 770 m  
(1,720 to 2,525 feet)

Slope (percent): Total range = 0 to 75 percent  
Central tendency = 12 to 40 percent

Aspect: 25-205-335

Central tendency: 160-205-285

**Table 2. Representative physiographic features**

|                    |                                                                                                 |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Landforms          | (1) Canyonlands > Canyon wall<br>(2) Canyonlands > Structural bench<br>(3) Plateau > Escarpment |
| Flooding frequency | None                                                                                            |
| Ponding frequency  | None                                                                                            |
| Elevation          | 520 – 770 m                                                                                     |
| Slope              | 10 – 40 %                                                                                       |
| Water table depth  | 200 cm                                                                                          |
| Aspect             | W, S, SW                                                                                        |

**Table 3. Representative physiographic features (actual ranges)**

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Flooding frequency | None          |
| Ponding frequency  | None          |
| Elevation          | 260 – 1,020 m |

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Slope             | 0 – 70 %    |
| Water table depth | 90 – 200 cm |

### Climatic features

#### Climatic Features

Frost-free period (days): Total range = 105 to 130 days

Central tendency = 110 to 120 days

Mean annual precipitation (cm): Total range = 420 to 910 mm

(17 to 36 inches)

Central tendency = 605 to 740 mm

(24 to 29 inches)

MAAT (C): Total range = 7.9 to 11.9 C

(46 to 53 F)

Central tendency = 8.9 to 10.2 C

(48 to 50 F)

Climate Stations: Kamiah, Kooskia, Kooskia 5 SSE, Orofino 3 E

### Influencing water features

Water Table Depth (cm):

94 – >200 cm (median = >200 cm)

(37 – 80 inches; median = >80 inches)

Flooding:

Frequency: None

Duration: None

Ponding:

Frequency: None

Duration: None

### Soil features

#### Representative Soil Features

This ecological subsite is associated with several soil series. The soils are Driscoll, Gibbs, Jacket, Keuterville, Kooskia, and Larkin. They are members of the Ultic Argixerolls, Pachic Ultic Argixerolls, Ultic Palexerolls, Vitrandic Argixerolls, and Xeric Argialbolls subgroups. These soils have developed in mixed Mazama tephra deposits over loess and material from basalt. The soils are very deep, and some soils have a perched water table within 30 inches of the surface during the winter and early spring. They do not have a water table present within 30 inches of the surface during the May to Oct period. The soils are moderately well or well drained.

Table 4. Representative soil features

|                 |                                                                                  |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Parent material | (1) Volcanic ash<br>(2) Loess<br>(3) Residuum – basalt<br>(4) Colluvium – basalt |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                  |                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surface texture                                  | (1) Silt loam<br>(2) Gravelly silt loam<br>(3) Ashy silt loam |
| Drainage class                                   | Well drained                                                  |
| Permeability class                               | Moderately slow                                               |
| Depth to restrictive layer                       | 200 cm                                                        |
| Available water capacity<br>(0-101.6cm)          | 18.29 cm                                                      |
| Calcium carbonate equivalent<br>(0-101.6cm)      | Not specified                                                 |
| Electrical conductivity<br>(0-101.6cm)           | Not specified                                                 |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water)<br>(0-152.4cm)         | 6.7                                                           |
| Subsurface fragment volume ≤3"<br>(25.4-152.4cm) | Not specified                                                 |
| Subsurface fragment volume >3"<br>(25.4-152.4cm) | Not specified                                                 |

**Table 5. Representative soil features (actual values)**

|                            |                                         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Drainage class             | Moderately well drained to well drained |
| Permeability class         | Moderately slow to slow                 |
| Depth to restrictive layer | 20 – 200 cm                             |

|                                                   |                  |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Available water capacity<br>(0-101.6cm)           | 14.22 – 20.83 cm |
| Calcium carbonate equivalent<br>(0-101.6cm)       | 0 %              |
| Electrical conductivity<br>(0-101.6cm)            | 0 mmhos/cm       |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water)<br>(0-152.4cm)          | 5.6 – 7.3        |
| Subsurface fragment volume <=3"<br>(25.4-152.4cm) | 0 – 30 %         |
| Subsurface fragment volume >3"<br>(25.4-152.4cm)  | 0 – 40 %         |

## Ecological dynamics

### Ecological Dynamics of the Site

This site is located on foot slopes and side slopes of hills, canyons and low mountains. It is on sites with more moisture than the pine/dry grass sites. Most of this site occurs under 2800' of elevation. Reference state is characteristic of mature pine stands over snowberry, serviceberry, spirea, chokecherry, woods rose, nutka rose, and ninebark. Redstem ceanothus may be present as evidence of past fires. Fire disturbance is sporadic and currently in the mixed severity or stand replacing regimes. It would not be considered in the pine/savanna category due to lack of frequent ground fires. Overstory canopy cover of these mature pine stands will range from 40 – 60%. These mature pine stands will be subject to bark beetle kill, windfall, and fire. The understory shrubs will resprout quickly and pine regeneration will be dependent on pine seed placement and shrub competition.

The pine/snowberry plant association will be located on the drier topographic locations and the pine/ninebark plant association will be located on northern aspects. These sites have been subject to overgrazing, introduced grass seeding and land conversion. Kentucky bluegrass and Canada bluegrass have invaded many of these sites dominating the understory. Sites on less sloping terrain may have been converted to crops, pasture, or urban land.

## State and transition model

## Additional community tables

Table 6. Community 1.1 plant community composition

| Group | Common Name | Symbol | Scientific Name | Annual Production () | Foliar Cover (%) |
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|

Table 7. Community 1.2 plant community composition

| Group | Common Name | Symbol | Scientific Name | Annual Production () | Foliar Cover (%) |
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|

Table 8. Community 1.3 plant community composition

| Group | Common Name | Symbol | Scientific Name | Annual Production () | Foliar Cover (%) |
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|

Table 9. Community 1.4 plant community composition

| Group | Common Name | Symbol | Scientific Name | Annual Production () | Foliar Cover (%) |
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|

Table 10. Community 2.1 plant community composition

| Group | Common Name | Symbol | Scientific Name | Annual Production () | Foliar Cover (%) |
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|
|-------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------|

## References

. 1998. NRCS National Forestry Manual.

. 2017. NRCS Soil and Site Index data for NE WA and N. Idaho.

Cooper, S.V., K.E. Neiman, R. Steele, and D.W. Roberts. 1991. Forest Habitat types of Northern Idaho, A Second Approximation.

Daubenmire, R. and J. Daubenmire. 1968. Forest Vegetation of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho.

Smith and Fischer. 1997. Fire Ecology of the Forest Habitat Types of Northern Idaho.

Williams, C.K., B.F. Kelley, B.G. Smith, and T.R. Lillybridge. October, 1995. Forested Plant Associations of the Colville National Forest.

Zack, A. 1997. Biophysical Classification- Habitat Groups and Description of Northern Idaho and Northwestern Montana, Lower Clarkfork and Adjacent Areas..

## Approval

Kirt Walstad, 4/11/2025

## Rangeland health reference sheet

**Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health** is a qualitative assessment protocol used to determine ecosystem condition based on benchmark characteristics described in the Reference Sheet. A suite of 17 (or more) indicators are typically considered in an assessment. The ecological site(s) representative of an assessment location must be known prior to applying the protocol and must be verified based on soils and climate. Current plant community cannot be used to identify the ecological site.

|                                             |                   |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Author(s)/participant(s)                    |                   |
| Contact for lead author                     |                   |
| Date                                        | 12/18/2020        |
| Approved by                                 |                   |
| Approval date                               |                   |
| Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on | Annual Production |

## Indicators

1. Number and extent of rills:

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2. Presence of water flow patterns:

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3. Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:

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4. Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):

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5. Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:

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6. Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:

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7. Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):

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8. Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):

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9. Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):

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10. Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:

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11. Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):

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12. Functional/Structural Groups (list in order of descending dominance by above-ground annual-production or live foliar cover using symbols: >>, >, = to indicate much greater than, greater than, and equal to):

Dominant:

Sub-dominant:

Other:

**Additional:**

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**13. Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**

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**14. Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):**

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**15. Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**

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**16. Potential invasive (including noxious) species (native and non-native). List species which BOTH characterize degraded states and have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the ecological site if their future establishment and growth is not actively controlled by management interventions. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants. Note that unlike other indicators, we are describing what is NOT expected in the reference state for the ecological site:**

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**17. Perennial plant reproductive capability:**

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